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# ANNOUNCEMENT

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Employee Performance Communication System (EPCS)

**SUBJECT:** Guidance to Managers: Performance Planning and Appraisals

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The performance appraisal period for FY04 started October 1, 2003 and ended September 30, 2004, except for employees in the Senior Executive Service. This announcement provides guidance to assist you in understanding the modified EPCS and its implications, preparing for the performance rating cycle, preparing performance plans and, utilizing the Supervisory Feedback Process.

## Highlights of the Modified EPCS

The Agency as of October 1, 2004 has approved a modified EPCS. There are several key features including:

- 3 level rating system instead of 2 levels to help provide distinctions among employees' performance;
- Standard rating period across the Agency of May 1 through April 30;
- Generic rating factors for both employees and supervisors that cascade from the Senior Executive Service performance plans; and
- Further emphasis on employee involvement in the performance appraisal process.

Prior to implementing the modified system several actions must be completed, including working with our unions to discuss the impact and implementation of the modified system. We anticipate utilizing the features of the modified system beginning May 1, 2005. Until the modified system is implemented, you will need to:

1. Conduct end of year appraisals by completing narrative summaries and assigning performance ratings for employees
2. Meet with employees to have performance appraisal discussions
3. Certify that performance appraisals are complete
4. Develop performance plans for October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2005 (recognizing that this period will be shortened when the modified system is implemented.)
5. Discuss the plan with your employee and offer individual development plans
6. Consider employees for awards, including performance awards

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The following is detailed information to assist you in completing these tasks:

### **Performance Ratings**

All employees who have been working under a performance plan for a minimum of 90 days (120 days for those employees covered under the Goddard Engineers, Scientist and Technicians Association and the American Federation of Government Employees bargaining units) should be assigned a rating of either "Meets Expectations" or "Fails to Meet Expectations." Appraisals should be conducted within 30 days after the end of the performance cycle (Sept. 30, 2004).

Providing employees with constructive feedback about their performance is an essential part of the appraisal process. Supervisors interested in improving their ability to provide effective feedback should contact the Leadership and Organizational Development Office for assistance. Supervisors who are working with employees whose performance may not be meeting expectations should work closely with their Human Resources Specialist (HRS). A HRS listing can be found at <http://ohr.gsfc.nasa.gov> under the heading, Contact Us.

When the NASA Employee Performance Communication System (EPCS) was implemented, the Office of Human Resources (OHR) discontinued retaining copies of appraisals, leaving managers responsible for ensuring that plans and appraisals were completed for each employee within a reasonable time period. OHR is responsible for ensuring that supervisors conduct progress reviews and timely performance appraisals as required by law. In order to do this, OHR continues to periodically review Employee Performance Files (EPF) to ensure that this requirement is met. We are also continuing to require that each Director or Office Chief certify that performance appraisals were completed for his/her organization.

### **Employee Performance Folder**

An official EPF must be maintained for each employee. The contents of this folder should include the current year plan and the previous 4 years of performance plans and appraisals. Awards certificates, training recommendations, letters of commendation, or other supporting information may be retained in the EPF. Supervisors should purge EPFs on an annual basis to avoid accumulating outdated information. These blue EPFs may be obtained through store stock number 753000G990478. **EPFs should be sent to reassigned organizations or the OHR when an employee resigns or retires as soon as possible.**

### **Performance Planning**

New performance plans should be created for each employee. The performance period should be noted as October 1, 2004 through September 30, 2005, although the modified system will be implemented prior to the end of this period. This plan should be written so that you and the employee will have a common understanding of what is expected. Your plan should include both critical elements and standards. The performance element describes what is expected and is a task or unit of work required by the employee's position. The performance standard describes how the tasks must be accomplished to justify a rating of "Meets Expectations." HRS's will view performance plans for all new employees to ensure plans are established within 60 days of the employee's entrance on duty date.

The current EPCS form includes generic standards that can be used. As an additional reference to assist you in developing standards, a handbook entitled Performance Management: Performance Standards and You is available from your HRS. In addition to developing and discussing performance elements and standards, you

should also discuss training and development opportunities with each employee during the performance planning session. These opportunities may be in the form of formal training classes, rotational assignments, or participating on/leading a team, to mention a few.

All employees should be offered the opportunity to create an Individual Development Plan (IDP). IDPs should be established through the combined efforts of the supervisor and the employee. Contact the Professional Development Center at 301-286-7823 for more information on IDPs and career planning and enrichment opportunities. For information on IDPs, please go to <http://ohr.gsfc.nasa.gov/devguide/idp.htm>.

The Career Development and Employee Worklife Office can also provide suggestions as to developmental programs you may want to discuss with your employee, such as the Part-Time Graduate Study program, etc. For information on planned offerings/programs or to find appropriate off-site courses, please go to <http://ohr.gsfc.nasa.gov/contact/trngcontacts.htm> for contact information by program or subject area.

### **Supervisory Feedback Process**

The Supervisory Feedback Process was developed to enable supervisors to receive constructive anonymous feedback from your direct employees and use it as a guideline to further enhance your supervisory performance. The feedback was collected via a web based survey and includes six major areas: Communication, Teamwork, Diversity-Inclusion, Human Resources, Change Orientation and Financial/Technical Management.

If at least three employees provided feedback to you, your results were sent via e-mail in September. Employees may provide anonymous feedback for up to three supervisors in their management chain. If at least three employees rated you, you will be responsible for sharing your feedback report with your supervisor during your performance appraisal. The feedback will then be considered as one element used by your supervisor in determining job assignments, performance appraisals, awards, promotions, and training and development.

You are encouraged to utilize the services of external facilitators to assist you in both interpreting your results, sharing them with your employees through a group discussion and to assist in action planning. Benefits include: an exchange of information that may provide examples, clarification and insight to the information in your report; the opportunity to share your action plans and commitments as well as to ask for help in achieving your plans; and increased accountability to meet your objectives. If you did not receive enough feedback to receive a report, you may still utilize the facilitators to have a group discussion with your employees and create an action plan.

### **Additional Resources**

If you have any questions concerning the performance management process including the supervisory feedback process, please contact your HRS or Ms. Christina LaFountain at 6-3729. There is also additional information on our website at [ohr.gsfc.nasa.gov](http://ohr.gsfc.nasa.gov).



Donna J. Swann

Chief, Human Resources Management Services Office

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